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**UTILITY
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Attorney Docket No. 0756-2045

First Inventor or Application Identifier: Kenji ITOH et al.

Title: PLASMA PROCESS, PLASMA APPARATUS PROCESS FOR
FABRICATING A MAGNETIC RECORDING MEDIUM, AND
APPARATUS FOR FABRICATING

Express Mail Label No.

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

ADDRESS TO:Assistant Commissioner for Patents
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1. ☒ Fee Transmittal Form (e.g., PTO/SB/17)
(Submit an original, and a duplicate for fee processing)
2. ☒ Specification Total Pages [28]
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
- Descriptive title of the Invention
 - Cross References to Related Applications
 - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
 - Reference to Microfiche Appendix
 - Background of the Invention
 - Brief Summary of the Invention
 - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
 - Detailed Description
 - Claim(s)
 - Abstract of the Disclosure
3. ☒ Drawing(s) (35 USC 113) Total Sheets [7]
4. ☒ Oath or Declaration Total Pages [2]
- a. ☐ Newly executed (original or copy)
- b. ☒ Copy from a prior application (37 CFR 1.63(d))
(for continuation/divisional with Box 17 completed)
[Note Box 5 below]
- I. ☐ DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)
Signed statement attached deleting
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see 37 CFR 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
5. ☒ Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4b is checked)
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a
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6. ☐ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)
7. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission
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ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

8. ☐ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))
9. ☐ 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement ☐ Power of Attorney
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17. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box, and supply the requisite information below and in a preliminary amendment

Divisional of prior application Serial No. 08/604,714 filed February 21, 1996; which itself is a Continuation of
application Serial No. 08/173,961 filed December 28, 1993.

Prior application information: Examiner: R. King

Group/Art Unit: 1762

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re DIVISIONAL Application of)
In re Divisional Patent Application of)
Kenji ITOH et al.)
Based On Serial No. 08/604,713) Art Unit: 1762
Which Was Filed: February 21, 1996) Examiner: R. King
For: PLASMA PROCESS, PLASMA)
APPARATUS PROCESS FOR)
FABRICATING A MAGNETIC)
RECORDING MEDIUM, AND)
APPARATUS FOR FABRICATING) Date: October 5, 1999

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Honorable Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Please preliminarily amend the subject application as follows:

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Before the first sentence of the specification, insert --This application is
a Divisional of Application Serial No. 08/604,714 filed February 21, 1996;

which itself is a Continuation of application Serial No. 08/173,961 filed December 28, 1993.--

REMARKS

This application has been amended to include the continuing application data thereof.

New claims 1 to 17 correspond to non-elected claims 1-13 and 17-20 of the parent application.

Examination on the merits is requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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TITLE OF THE INVENTION

PLASMA PROCESS, PLASMA APPARATUS, PROCESS FOR FABRICATING A MAGNETIC RECORDING MEDIUM, AND APPARATUS FOR FABRICATING THE SAME

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a rapid process for treating a substrate with a plasma, such as a film deposition process, an etching process and an ashing process. More particularly, the present invention relates to a rapid process for depositing a diamond-like carbon (hereinafter sometimes abbreviated as "DLC") film having superior properties with respect to wear resistance, surface smoothness, insulating properties, hardness, and the like. The present invention also relates to an apparatus for fabricating, on a polymer substrate, a long-endurable magnetic recording medium suitable for mass production, and yet having high recording density. Accordingly, the application field of the present invention covers a wide area ranging from visual equipments to information apparatuses.

Prior Art

The application field of diamond-like carbon films is widely spreading these days because the films are as hard as, or even harder than, the conventionally known hard thin films of, for example, TiC, TiN, SiC, Si₃N₄, and Al₂O₃, and yet, the DLC films can be deposited at room temperature without the application of a heating process.

Recently, a plasma treatment is applied in a wide field of industry to not only a semiconductor process but also a surface of a metal, a fiber and a plastic. Main plasma treatments can be classified into a film formation, an etching and an ashing and the like. Physical vapor deposition (PVD) and chemical vapor

deposition (CVD) are known as the film formation. Sputtering is the representative process in the field of PVD (physical vapor deposition), while plasma CVD is the typical one in the field of CVD (chemical vapor deposition). Contrary to CVD, the etching and the ashing are processes in which a substance is removed from a substrate surface by a chemical or physical action of active species activated by the plasma. The CVD is generally carried out in a heated atmosphere, and the etching and the ashing are carried out at room temperature.

A low temperature CVD process for forming a film at a low temperature is desired in variety of application field of CVD in that more kinds of substrate materials can be used in the low temperature CVD process, and cost of the substrate can be reduced by employing the low temperature CVD process. In particular, CVD making use of a kinetic energy of an ion is used for carbon film. The carbon film is formed with the carbon film receiving bombardment by the ion. A bond having a large bond energy is then selectively formed to form a film of high hardness which is collectively called a diamond-like carbon (DLC). Substrate heating is not particularly necessary in the formation of the DLC film as apparent from an elementary process of the formation of the DLC film. Therefore, the DLC films are promising as a variety of protection films from the advantage of the DLC films in cost.

A DLC film can be formed by sputtering, e.g. a reactive sputtering using graphite or SiC partially containing silicon as the target material in a mixed gas atmosphere of argon and hydrogen.

FIG. 1 shows schematically the inner structure of a practically used prior art apparatus.

In general, the carbon source material for use as the starting material in the case of forming DLC by CVD include a

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saturated hydrocarbon gas such as methane (CH_4) as described in JP-B-61-53955 or JP-B-62-41476 (the term "JP-B-" as referred to herein signifies an "examined Japanese patent publication") and others containing more carbon atoms per molecule, or an unsaturated hydrocarbon gas such as methylene (C_2H_4) and others containing more carbon atoms per molecule. Furthermore, the use of substances containing silicon as partial substituents, such as tetramethylsilane (TMS; $(\text{CH}_3)_4\text{Si}$) and tetraethylsilane (TES; $(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4\text{Si}$) is also studied.

However, with the prior art film deposition methods or processes using the commercially available conventional apparatuses, it is fundamentally difficult to obtain a DLC film at a high rate of film deposition while maintaining its properties as a protective film at a favorably high level. In other words, a film of superior quality can be obtained only at the expense of the high rate of film deposition. Thus, in depositing a film of sufficiently high quality, a film deposition rate which is practically feasible is approximately in the range of from 0.1 to 0.3 $\mu\text{m}/\text{min}$. Moreover, the conventional apparatuses and methods for film deposition fail to achieve a satisfactory level of dehydrogenation to sufficiently accelerate the formation of covalent bonds between carbon atoms during the deposition of the carbon film.

In addition, it has been difficult to generate and maintain a stable plasma in depositing a film over a large area using the above static methods in which the substrates are fixed. The thermal damage which the substrates suffer upon film deposition at high rate also remains as a problem yet to be solved.

Recently, a higher recording density is required for magnetic recording media. Accordingly, the conventional magnetic recording media such as audio and video tapes which have been fabricated by a coating process, i.e., a process which comprises

coating a polymer substrate with a magnetic powder of, for example, γ - Fe_2O_3 , CrO , or pure iron, using a binder and an abrasive material, are now being replaced by those having a stable metallic thin-film type magnetic layer obtained by depositing a magnetic metal such as iron (Fe), nickel (Ni), cobalt (Co), and chromium (Cr), using PVD processes (in a broader meaning) such as vacuum deposition, plating, ion plating, and sputtering. In this manner, a magnetic recording media having not only a higher recording density but also a superior coercive force and an improved electromagnetic conversion property can be obtained at a higher productivity.

Recently, the DLC films are also formed using CVD processes represented by a plasma-assisted CVD or any of the PVD processes enumerated above.

It is still difficult to obtain layered thin films having favorable interface characteristics and surface properties using any of the above processes while maintaining a high rate of film deposition, because of the problems such as those associated with the step of air exposure and the like, and the technically difficult ones concerning synchronizing the deposition of the magnetic film and the DLC film at such a high film deposition rate. It is therefore desired to develop a new process of film deposition.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is characterized in that a process for treating a substrate with plasma comprises generating said plasma in the form of plane in a chamber. The substrate may be moved through the plasma in a direction perpendicular to the plane of the plasma to treat the substrate with the plasma.

It is an object of the present invention to treat a substrate with a plasma at a higher rate. In order to accomplish

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this object, a plasma is generated intentionally at a high density in a reaction space with a material gas (or a raw material gas) being supplied to said plasma according to a process to be conducted.

Since the region having a high plasma density is confined within a narrow region in the present invention, it is necessary to move a substrate through the region in order to treat a large area surface of the substrate with the plasma. For example, a film can be deposited on the substrate by moving the substrate through the region. Although the substrate movement requires a more complex mechanical structure and an additional cost for the structure, a thermal damage can be alleviated by the present invention during the plasma treatment such as a film formation.

Further, a surface of one or both of the anode and cathode is covered with an electrical insulator to stabilize the high density plasma region. The present invention is also characterized in that a dynamic film deposition step is incorporated in the process for the deposition of a diamond-like carbon film. More specifically, the film is deposited on a substrate being moved inside the light-emitting region, i.e., the plasma region of a sheet-like beam-type, in which a light emission of high luminance can be easily realized.

The present invention is also characterized in that dimethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{H}_2$) and monomethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)\text{H}_3$) and the like are used to avoid providing a rate-determining step as the supply of a starting material for the diamond-like carbon film even if the starting material is consumed in a large amount for the plasma.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGs. 1(A) and 1(B) show cross sectional views of the internal structures of apparatuses for depositing DLC films used

in conventional processes;

FIG. 2 shows a cross sectional view of the internal structure of an apparatus for depositing DLC films according to the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a graph showing the dependence of film deposition rate on the operation pressure and on the density of high frequency power for a DLC film obtained in Example 1 according to the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a graph showing the dependence of film deposition rate on the operation pressure and on the density of high frequency power for a DLC film obtained in Example 2 according to the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a cross sectional view of the internal structure of an apparatus for fabricating a magnetic recording medium according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a cross sectional view of a magnetic recording medium obtained according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a Raman spectrum of a DLC film of a magnetic recording medium according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 8 is a graph which shows the change of reproduced output with the change in the film thickness of a DLC film according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A high density plasma region is formed in the vicinity of a gas supply port in the form of pore or slit provided in a part of the ground electrode, and the starting material is effectively decomposed and activated. For example, in the case of the formation of DLC, a film of high quality is formed at a high rate. A region having a high plasma density is formed in the

vicinity of a slit (or a pore) provided on a surface of an anode (i.e. a ground electrode) for supplying the material gas to the plasma, and has an emission brightness much higher than a region therearound to such a degree that the plasma can easily be distinguished by visual observation.

The high density plasma region is formed in the vicinity of the gas supply port in the form of pore or slit. This is because the vicinity of the gas supply port has a higher gas pressure than the region other than said vicinity and therefore a high density plasma is formed in the region having the high gas pressure by applying a sufficient electric field. It is effective to form an edge of the gas exhaust nozzle sharply at the surface of the anode in order to apply a sufficient electric field. This is because the strength of the electric field becomes large in the vicinity in the vicinity, or said edge. Also, it is effective to narrow the gap between the anode electrode and the cathode electrode for the reason same as above. The gap between the electrodes is preferably 30mm or shorter, more preferably 10mm or shorter to generate a desirable plasma.

It is advantageous to form a plasma in the form of plane as the high density plasma region. This is because a plane surface of a substrate can be treated with plasma by moving the substrate in one direction perpendicular to the plane of the plasma. In the case where a surface of a substrate in the form of sheet or tape wound around the drum is treated with plasma, the plasma in the form of plane is generated in parallel with an axis of the drum, and is apart from the surface of the drum at an appropriate distance, and the drum is revolved in order to treat the surface of the substrate in the form of sheet or tape with plasma with ease.

The plasma in the form of plane can be formed by providing a gas exhaust nozzle (gas supply port) in the form of slit. Also,

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it is possible to generate a plasma in the form of plane by arranging pores one-dimensionally . In case of arranging pores one dimensionally, distance between the adjacent pores should be less than ten times, preferably less than twice, as long as diameter of the pores (the average diameter calculated from length of the major axis and length of the minor axis in the case where the pore is not an circle. The diameter of the pores is 10mm or shorter, preferably 5mm or shorter. In the case where the gas supply port is in the form of slit, width of the slit is 10mm or shorter, preferably 5mm or shorter. The pores are advantageous in that a higher intensity of electric field and a higher density of plasma are produced by the pores rather than by the slit, however, the slit is advantageous in that more uniform plasma is produced by the slit rather than by the pores. In addition, as the width of the slit or the diameter of the pores is decreased, the plasma density increases, however, an upper limit of the gas flow rate decreases. In the case where the width of the slit or the diameter of the pores is too small, the gas flow rate becomes large to increase the plasma density by the local increase of the pressure and to make the plasma unstable. A plasma in the form of plane having a length of several meters can be produced by lengthening the length of the slit or increasing the number of the pores since the length of the plasma has no theoretical upper limit.

It is effective to cover one or both of the surfaces of the anode and the cathode (in detail, the surface(s) in contact with the plasma) with an electrical insulator in order to stabilize the high density plasma region. Without the cover of the electrical insulator, the plasma discharge would tend to become an arc discharge because an electrical resistance (impedance) of the plasma decreases as the plasma density is increased. The arc discharge is unstable and damages the electrode badly and is not

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suitable for a stable process although the arc discharge has a high plasma density. The electrical insulator is used in the present invention to prevent the arc discharge from occurring. SiO_2 , Al_2O_3 , ZrO_2 , PZT and the like are suitable for the insulator. Though depending on a frequency of a power source, in the case where a discharge is caused at a relatively low frequency (less than order of kHz), the specific dielectric constant of the insulator is important. The specific dielectric constant is preferably 2 or more, more preferably 5 or more. The insulator is formed as thin as possible as long as the withstand voltage thereof is sufficient. The thickness of the insulator is 3mm or less, preferably 1mm or less.

Of course, it is possible to form a high density plasma even if both of the electrodes are not insulated. It is preferable to insulate the electrode(s) in order to stabilize the plasma. On the other hand, a capacitance is formed by the provision of the insulator from the point of electric circuit view to increase an impedance between the electrodes. Accordingly, the plasma density decreases without supplying electric power effectively. It is advantageous not to provide the insulator unless there is a problem on stability.

The high density plasma region has an intimate relation with a local pressure in the vicinity of gas exhaust nozzle. Therefore, the length of the high density plasma region can be adjusted through variation of the gas flow velocity by adjustment of the gas flow rate. By this, the substrate surface can be in contact with and not in contact with the high density plasma region even if the distance between the substrate and the plasma generation apparatus is not varied. Of course, this is possible also in the case where the distance between the substrate and the plasma generation apparatus is varied. In the case where the substrate is in contact with the high density plasma region, the

plasma treatment can be effected at a high speed, however, the substrate receives a damage. In the case where the substrate is not in contact with the high density plasma region, the substrate is free from bombardment thereto by an ion, and only neutral active species contributes to reaction, resulting in no damage to the substrate. But reaction speed and a quality of the product after the reaction is not so good only by the neutral active species if the plasma treatment is carried out at room temperature. In this case, heating from room temperature to 300°C is necessary.

Pressure inside the reaction space is 800 to 0.1 Torr, preferably 5 to 0.5 Torr. This pressure does not mean a local pressure in the vicinity of the gas exhaust nozzle but means a measurable pressure of a region other than said vicinity. Mean free path is meaningful in the above range. If the pressure is too low, a gas diffuses before the local pressure in the vicinity of the exhaust nozzle increases sufficiently. If the pressure is too high, electrons collide with each other before the electrons obtain energies necessary to start discharge, with the result that the discharge can not start.

In the case where the electrode is not covered with the insulator, the electric field applied to the electrode may be DC or AC.

In the case where the electrode is covered with the insulator, it is necessary to apply an AC electric field thereto. The frequency can be increased to an upper limit at which the electric field can be applied between the parallel plate type electrodes. In the case where the electrode is not covered with the insulator, there is no lower limit of the frequency. In the case where the electrode is covered with the insulator, the lower limit is determined by specific dielectric constant and thickness of the insulator. In practical use, 10Hz to 2GHz is

possible, and 50Hz to 900MHz is preferable. The supplied electric power density is 0.1 to 10W/cm² preferably 0.5 to 3W/cm².

A variety of processes are possible by using the above-described plasma treatment apparatus such as a film formation process, an etching process and an ashing process as representative.

Examples of the film formation process are processes for forming a semiconductor film (such as amorphous silicon), a dielectric film (such as a silicon oxide film, a silicon nitride film and a titanium oxide film), a metallic film made of e.g. tungsten and other films which could be formed by a conventional chemical vapor deposition. In particular, the present invention has a lot of advantages in the case where a film containing carbon as a main ingredient for use as a protection film of abrasion proof and lubricity is formed by the plasma treatment apparatus of the present invention. A cathode is bombarded by an ion by self-bias if the cathode is supplied with an electric energy through capacitance coupling. Therefore, if the substrate is provided on the cathode, the film is formed on the substrate surface with the substrate surface receiving the bombardment of the ion. This is necessary for an elementary process for forming a carbon film of high hardness as described above. The present invention is advantageous in that the plasma treatment can be carried out at room temperature since the film containing carbon as a main ingredient used as a protective film of abrasion proof and lubricity is often formed on a substrate which can not be kept at a high temperature, such as an organic resin substrate and a magnetic substrate (e.g. a magnetic tape and a magnetic optical disc and the like). In addition, since a high density plasma can be produced by the apparatus of the present invention to conduct the film formation at a high speed. In this way, an

apparatus which is excellent in mass-production can be realized.

Since starting materials as specified above are used, not only the probability of the existence of methyl groups (CH_3) can be increased, but also the effect of dehydrogenation can be greatly increased.

The specific materials above can be easily handled, and, moreover, the maintenance and administrative regulations are far relaxed as compared with those for the conventional so-called high-pressure gases. Concerns on environmental pollution of the discharge gas can also be minimized.

The etching of the present invention is same as the film formation of the present invention except that the material gas is replaced by an etching gas. A simple gas comprising an element selected from the group consisting of fluorine, chlorine and bromine, or a gas mixture of an inert gas and the above simple gas can be used as the etching gas. A substrate comprising silicon, a silicon compound, carbon, or an organic substance or the like can be etched. Ashing is a special case of an etching, and oxygen is used as a material gas. An inert gas may be mixed with the material gas. Ashing by the apparatus of the present invention is suitable for peeling a resist. That is, a time required for the treatment is shortened in the same manner as the film formation to lower the cost. Further, it is effective to treat the substrate with plasma by positively exposing the substrate to a high density plasma region in case of ashing. This is because the substrate is heated by bombardment from the high density plasma region thereto to contribute to increase of a reaction speed.

In the process according to the present invention, the separate film deposition regions are organically and rationally linked into synchronizing regions. This is achieved by adjusting,

to a desired value, the pressure difference among the operation pressures of the independent steps for a non-continuous process comprising a plurality of different film deposition steps. In this manner, the mass production of highly reliable magnetic recording media having isotropic magnetic properties for in-plane recording is realized.

The process according to the present invention implements groups of layered thin films having excellent properties with respect to, for example, interface characteristics, adhesiveness, surface properties, and the like. This is realized by changing the operation pressure inside the film deposition region (vacuum vessel) which is subjected to a plurality of steps, either step-wise or in a graded manner. The resulting vacuum apparatus not only operates in good condition and functionally, but also effectively provides films of superior quality.

The present invention is illustrated in greater detail referring to non-limiting examples below. It should be understood, however, that the present invention is not to be construed as being limited thereto.

EXAMPLE 1

Referring to FIG. 2, the invention according to the present invention is described below. In this example, formation of a diamond-like carbon film (DLC) by the use of a dimethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{H}_2$) is described.

The apparatus for use in the process for depositing a DLC film according to the present invention comprises special devices for use in the steps of transporting the substrates and in the supply of high frequency power, because substrates 104 are placed on one side of an electrode 102 for supplying high frequency power. The electrode 102 for supplying high frequency power is placed at a distance of 1 cm from a ground electrode 103, and the

both are placed inside a vacuum vessel 101. The electrode 102 for supplying high frequency power also functions as a substrate holder to support the substrates, for instance, in this example, 12 pieces of 3.5-inch magnetic diskettes are used as the substrates having thereon a magnetic layer. The transport system comprises components such as rails, racks, and pinions, which are made of insulators. Thus, they are DC-insulated and are arranged in a floating structure.

The high frequency power is supplied from a high frequency power source 107 via an indirect capacitive coupling 110 based on a vacuum gap.

A method for generating a one-dimensional high density plasma region having a high-luminance light emission is described specifically below.

In the structure described above, the starting material, i.e., dimethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{H}_2$) as the carbon source, is introduced from a material supply system 108 at a flow rate of 20 SCCM (standard cubic centimeters per minute) to set the operation pressure to 1 Torr, while evacuating an evacuation system 108.

Because the ground electrode 103 has a hollow structure, the carbon source material is transported into a space between the electrodes through gas supply inlets 111 which are precisely processed to make a slit 0.5 cm in width and 30 cm in length. Then, a linear one-dimensional high density plasma region 109 having a high luminance light emission can be locally generated by applying a high frequency power at a power density of 2 W/cm^2 from the high frequency power source system 107. The substrates 104 are transferred through the plasma region at a rate of 90 m/min to form a 200 Å thick DLC film on the magnetic layer of the magnetic diskette. The number of the slits per centimeter is 1.

It can be seen that the process according to the present invention is advantageous in that the vacuum vessel itself can be

made compact, not only because the volume of the space of plasma discharge is reduced by narrowing the gap between the electrodes, but also because the vessel itself can be constructed from thinner walls.

Furthermore, instead of a conventional plasma region widely spread over the entire space between the electrodes, the region for film deposition in the process according to the present invention is confined to a limited area in the vicinity of the slit-like gas supply inlet 111 of the ground electrode 103. In this manner, a dynamic process for film deposition can be implemented with ease.

FIG. 3 is a graph illustrating the dependence of film deposition rate on the operation pressure and on the density of high frequency power for a DLC film obtained in the present Example using substrates on the electrode, i.e., substrates in a dynamic state.

It can be seen that, as compared with the prior art film deposition processes in which the films are deposited at a rate of from about 0.1 to 0.3 $\mu\text{m}/\text{min}$, the DLC film of a similar quality can be deposited by the process according to the present invention at a film deposition rate higher by a digit than the rate of a conventional process. This high deposition rate is achieved owing partially to the use of a novel starting material. Furthermore, it is confirmed that the value of the residual internal stress of the film obtained by the process according to the present invention is reduced by about a half to one digit as compared with the value obtained for a film deposited by a conventional process.

EXAMPLE 2

A DLC film is deposited in the same manner as described in Example 1, except for using monomethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)\text{H}_3$) in the

place of dimethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{H}_2$).

As expected, the film deposition rate is found to be lowered by about 35% as compared with the rate for the process of Example 1. However, tendencies similar to the case of Example 1 are observed concerning the film deposition conditions such as the dependence on operation pressure and on the density of high frequency power.

The amount of unfavorable deposition of carbon coating (such as amorphous carbon and graphite) on the inner walls of vacuum vessel, electrodes, and the like, is found to be extremely reduced as compared with the case in Example 1. Thus, it is found that the case of Example 2 using monomethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)\text{H}_3$) is superior to the case in Example 1 considering the maintenance and control of the apparatus.

FIG. 4 is a graph similar to FIG. 3, except that the properties are measured on the film fabricated in Example 2.

EXAMPLE 3

Referring to FIGs. 5 to 8, a process according to an embodiment of the present invention is described below.

In a vacuum vessel 1 as shown in FIG. 5, a polymer substrate material 3 is fed from a supply roll 2 being run along a cylindrical can 7 in the direction indicated with an arrow via a free roller guide 4. The polymer substrate material 3 used in this Example is a polyimide film 50 cm in width and 6 μm in thickness.

The vaporized metal atoms that are supplied from an evaporation source 6 are deposited on the polymer substrate material 3 to provide a 0.15 to 0.18 μm thick magnetic layer 21 as shown in FIG. 6.

In the present Example, a Co-Cr-Ni alloy is used as the evaporation source. Furthermore, a pierce-type electron gun

capable of scanning over a wide area is operated at an accelerating voltage of 35 kV under an operation pressure of 5×10^{-4} Torr to deposit a film by electron beam vacuum deposition process. The rate of transferring the polymer substrate material 3 is fixed to 135 m/min. A shield plate 5 is provided for confining the area of film deposition.

The potential difference is provided between the cylindrical can 7 and the deposited magnetic layer 21 using a DC power source 15 via a free roller guide 4. By applying a voltage of 80 V and thereby applying an electrostatic force in the manner described above, the polymer substrate material 3 is brought into intimate contact with the cylindrical can 7.

The polymer substrate material 3 having thereon the magnetic layer is introduced to another vacuum vessel 9 via an intermediate roll 8, and is subjected to plasma activation treatment.

The step of plasma activation treatment is explained below.

In this step, the operating pressure is kept in the range of from 10^{-1} to 10^{-2} Torr by introducing hydrogen gas from a gas supply system 18 into a space between an earth electrode 10 and an electrode 11 for supplying high frequency power which are arranged in parallel to each other at a distance of 3 cm, while evacuating using an evacuation system 19. A 13.56-MHz high frequency power is applied to the space between the electrodes at a power density of 0.5 W/cm^2 using a high frequency power source system 12 to generate a hydrogen plasma between the electrodes. Then, the polymer substrate material 3 is transferred through this plasma region 16 at a rate synchronized with the step of forming the magnetic layer.

In this manner, the surface of the magnetic layer 21 is properly cleaned by exposure to the active hydrogen radicals or hydrogen ions, and is activated at the same time. It is confirmed

that similar effects are obtained in the case using argon gas or a mixed gas of argon and hydrogen.

By the way, an opening provided on a partition partitioning the vacuum vessel 9 and a buffer chamber 20 is provided to transfer the polymer substrate material 3 therethrough and has a size smaller than a Debye distance of the plasma generated in the vacuum vessel 9 or smaller than a mean free path under a pressure of the plasma region 16. In such a size, the plasma does not escape into the buffer chamber 20.

A process which takes place inside another vacuum vessel 13 which defines the region for depositing a DLC film 22 according to the present invention is described below.

The polymer substrate material 3 having thereon the magnetic layer 21, which is introduced into the vessel 13 via a free guide roller 4, is passed through a sheet-like beam-type plasma region 17. In this manner, a high quality DLC film 22 can be formed on the polymer substrate material 3.

More specifically, the sheet-like beam-type plasma region 17 is generated by, for example, a process as described below.

The operation pressure is controlled to keep a value of 1 Torr by supplying ethylene gas as the carbon source between the earth electrode 10 and the electrode 11 for supplying high frequency power. The electrodes are arranged in parallel to each other and a distance of 1 cm is precisely kept therebetween. Because the earth electrode 10 is provided in a hollow structure, the carbon source material is transported into a space between the electrodes through a gas supply inlet which is precisely machined to make a slit from 0.5 to 1.0 cm in width and 60 cm in length. Then, a linear plasma region having a high luminance light emission is locally generated by applying a high frequency power at a power density of 3 W/cm^2 from the high frequency power source system 12. The substrates are then transported through the

plasma region at a rate interlocked with the rates of the aforementioned two steps to form thereon a 200 Å thick diamond film. The resulting film is taken up using a take up roll 14. The key in this step is that the polymer substrate material 3 is run on the electrode 11 for supplying high frequency power.

In depositing a DLC film 22 on the substrate, i.e., the polymer substrate material 3, the substrate is fixed on the electrode 11 for supplying high frequency power. Concerning the mobility, mass, and the like of the species in the plasma, e.g., molecules, atoms, cations and anions, radicals, etc., electrons are the only species which accumulate on the surface of the substrate and on the electrode 11 for supplying high frequency power. Thus, an electric field is formed between the plasma potential and the self bias potential which is generated in the vicinity of the electrode 11 for supplying high frequency power due to the electrons described above. Then, the cations are accelerated in the electric field and undergo collision with the DLC film which is being deposited. In this manner, the physical and chemical reactions are accelerated to reduce the number of double bonds among carbon atoms ($C=C$), thereby increasing the fraction of carbon atoms having saturated carbon atoms ($C-C$). Then, a film of superior quality can be obtained.

It is also possible to overcome the problem of causing thermal damage to the substrate by running the polymer substrate material 3 at a predetermined rate on the electrode 11 for supplying high frequency power. Thus, it is possible to prevent the thermal damage of the substrate from occurring, because such thermal damages occur when the substrates are fixed and subjected to a static process in which the film is deposited at a high rate of film deposition.

FIG. 6 shows the cross sectional view of a magnetic recording medium fabricated by the film deposition steps above.

It can be seen that a favorable interface is obtained between the magnetic layer 21 and the DLC film 22.

FIG. 7 shows the Raman spectrogram of the DLC film 22 obtained in the Example according to the present invention. It can be seen that a film of superior quality is obtained even when the film is deposited at a high rate.

In the process according to the present invention, the substrate material may be subjected to a pretreatment before forming the magnetic layer 21, if necessary. The pretreatment is performed using any of the known techniques, such as the irradiation of ions, electrons, etc., or heating. Furthermore, the substrate material may not be the same material as the one used in the present example, i.e., polyimide. Other materials applicable to the present invention as substrates include metals, resins, and plastics, which may be shaped into rolls or sheets.

FIG. 8 shows the results obtained on the DLC film 22, by evaluating the reproduction output with changing film thickness. The recording frequency is also varied. It can be seen that the reproduction output tends to yield a constant value for DLC films 22 whose thickness exceeds a value of 200 Å, thereby suggesting the importance of surface smoothness.

Then, the thus fabricated magnetic recording medium is cut into tapes 8 mm in width, and the tapes are subjected to tests to evaluate the reproduction output and durability using a commercially available 8-mm video tape deck. A stable reproduction output with less dropouts is obtained for tapes having thereon a DLC film 22 at a thickness of 200 Å or more; excellent still durability and running stability are also obtained for such tapes.

In addition to the excellent durability in normal reproduction operation, it is also confirmed that the above tapes yield superior durability even in special tests of continuous and

continual operations.

EXAMPLE 4

In this EXAMPLE 4, an etching is conducted using NF_3 as an etching gas in the apparatus of EXAMPLE 1. A silicon wafer is used as a substrate. NF_3 is supplied from a raw material supply system 106 at 200sccm. Pressure inside the reaction vessel is kept 3 Torr. A high frequency energy is applied from a high frequency power source 107 at a power density of $3\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$ to generate a plasma. A substrate holder is moved in a direction perpendicular to the generated one-dimensional high density plasma at a speed of 1 cm/sec. A surface of the substrate is subjected to an etching with the surface of the substrate being in contact with the high density plasma region. After one scanning, the surface of the silicon wafer is etched to a depth of $0.4\mu\text{m}$.

EXAMPLE 5

Ashing is conducted using O_2 as an ashing gas in the apparatus of EXAMPLE 1.

A glass of 100mm in diagonal is used as a substrate. This substrate is used in a process for producing a TFT for LCD. Ashing performance for peeling a resist after an ion doping for formation of a channel is examined in this EXAMPLE 5.

A positive type resist OFPR-800 manufactured by Tokyo Ouka Co., Ltd. having a viscosity of 30cps is used as the resist. The resist is formed as follows. Spin-coating is performed and then pre-baking is performed for 20minutes at 80°C . Light irradiation is carried out for 20seconds by an ultraviolet ray at a center wavelength of 365nm at 2mW with a mask. Then, development is carried out for one minute by a developing solution NMD3 manufactured by Tokyo Ouka Co., Ltd. Washing is performed and

then post-baking is performed for 30 minutes at 130°C. Thickness of the resist is 2μm after this post-baking.

Thereafter, boron is ion-doped at 1×10^{19} atoms/cm² by ion implantation.

Since the resist subjected to the ion implantation is heated by the ion implantation, the resist can hardly be peeled by a peeling agent Stripper 10 manufactured by Tokyo Ouka Co., Ltd.

Ashing of the resist provided on the substrate is carried out by the use of the above-described apparatus under the following discharging condition.

Gap between electrodes:	10mm
Width of slit:	5mm
Length of the slit:	30cm
Frequency of applied electric field:	13.56MHz
Applied electric power:	5W/cm ²
Reaction gas:	oxygen
Oxygen flow rate:	500sccm
Scanning speed of substrate:	50mm/min.

It was confirmed that the resist was ashed and removed by once scanning the resist provided on the substrate through the plasma generated under the above condition. This corresponds to an ashing rate of 8000Å/min., provided that an effective treatment area extends to a width of 5mm without movement of the substrate. This rate of 8000Å/min. is much higher than a rate of 1000Å/min. obtained by barrel type.

A sufficiently good characteristic of TFT is obtained by the present example. No damage is observed in the substrate treatment of the present invention.

As described in the foregoing, the process speed is increased in any application to such as a film formation, an

etching and an ashing by using a plasma apparatus and a plasma process according to the present invention. The present invention is then suitable for mass-production. In particular, the film containing carbon as a main ingredient formed by the present invention has superior properties with respect to, for example, wear resistance, surface smoothness, high insulating properties, and hardness. Moreover, the problem concerning the rate-controlling factor, i.e., the supply rate of the material gas, is also overcome by the present invention to enable mass production of the DLC films. Further, throughput of the ashing is extremely improved.

Since the process according to the present invention is not based on the conventional static process, it is also confirmed that the present process does not induce damages on the substrate even when the film is deposited at a high film deposition rate.

It is further confirmed that the silicon-containing materials, i.e., dimethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{H}_2$) and monomethylsilane ($\text{Si}(\text{CH}_3)\text{H}_3$) are excellent materials from the viewpoint of conformity with the underlying substrate material in case of depositing a film containing carbon as a main ingredient, and that they yield superior interface properties and adhesion strength when the film containing carbon as a main ingredient is deposited on the substrate material.

The magnetic recording media fabricated by the apparatus according to the present invention comprises an interface between the magnetic layer and the diamond-like carbon film exhibiting improved interface properties and adhesion strength. It is fundamentally impossible to remove lower oxides from the surface of the magnetic layer by simply avoiding the surface from being exposed to the atmosphere, however, it is still effective to perform the plasma activation treatment according to the present invention.

The present invention provides diamond-like carbon films having considerably improved surface properties, i.e., excellent resistance to wear, smooth surface, and a high level of hardness. Accordingly, the DLC film according to the present invention enables the fabrication of industrially valuable magnetic recording media. Furthermore, the present invention circumvents the rate-controlling factor from being incorporated in realizing continuous film deposition.

While the invention has been described in detail and with reference to specific embodiments thereof, it will be apparent to one skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope thereof.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for treating a substrate with plasma comprising:
generating said plasma in the form of plane in a chamber.
2. The process of claim 1 further comprising moving said substrate
5 through said plasma in a direction perpendicular to said plane of said plasma to treat
said substrate with said plasma.
3. The process of claim 2 wherein pressure in said chamber is in the
range of from 0.1 to 800 Torr.
4. The process of claim 2 wherein a starting material gas is flown into
10 said plasma in a direction parallel to said plane of said plasma from at least one gas
supply slit provided in a ground electrode provided in said chamber.
5. The process of claim 2 wherein said plasma has a cross section in
parallel to said substrate at a ratio (length thereof)/(width thereof) of 10 or more.
6. The process of claim 4 wherein said gas supply slit has a ratio (length
15 thereof)/(width thereof) of 5 or more.
7. The process of claim 2 wherein a starting material gas is flown into
said plasma in a direction parallel to said plane of said plasma from a plurality of gas
supply ports arranged on a line and provided in a ground electrode provided in said
chamber.
- 20 8. A process for depositing a diamond-like carbon film comprising:
generating a plasma in the form of plane in a chamber for depositing
said diamond-like carbon film; and moving a substrate through said plasma in a

direction perpendicular to said plane of said plasma to deposit said diamond-like carbon film on said substrate.

9. The process of claim 8 wherein pressure in said chamber is in the range of from 0.1 to 800 Torr.

5 10. The process of claim 8 wherein a starting material gas is flown into said plasma in a direction parallel to said plane of said plasma from at least one gas supply slit provided in a ground electrode provided in said chamber.

10 11. The process of claim 8 wherein a starting material gas is flown into said plasma in a direction parallel to said plane of said plasma from a plurality of gas supply ports arranged on a line and provided in a ground electrode provided in said chamber.

12. The process of claim 10 wherein said starting material gas comprises $\text{Si}(\text{C}_x\text{H}_{2x+1})_{4-y}\text{H}_y$ where x is an integer of 1 or more, and y is an integer from 0 to 3.

13. The process of claim 8 wherein said plasma contains a methyl group.

15 14. A method for forming a diamond-like carbon film by a roll-to-roll apparatus comprising:

a feeding roll for feeding an organic resin film therefrom;

a winding roll for winding said organic resin film therearound; and

at least one chamber for forming said diamond-like carbon film, said

20 method comprising:

revolving said winding roll to wind said organic resin film therearound so that said organic resin film is passed through said at least one chamber; and

forming said diamond-like carbon film in said at least one chamber by a plasma generated in the form of plane in said at least one chamber during said revolving step.

5 15. The method of claim 14 wherein said organic resin film has a magnetic layer provided thereon, and said diamond-like carbon film is formed on said magnetic layer.

10 16. An apparatus for fabricating a magnetic recording medium by sequentially and continuously forming a magnetic layer and a diamond-like carbon film on a polymer substrate material, said apparatus comprising:
 a first vacuum vessel for forming the magnetic layer of the magnetic recording medium; and
 a second vacuum vessel for forming the diamond-like carbon film, wherein the pressure difference between the operation pressures for the first vessel and the second vessel is set in the range of from 10^{-2} to 10^{-5} Torr.

15 17. The apparatus of claim 16 further comprising a third vacuum vessel for performing plasma activation treatment between the first vessel and the second vacuum vessel.

ABSTRACT

A process for depositing a diamond-like carbon film, which comprises providing a means for generating a sheet-like beam-type plasma region inside a vacuum vessel for depositing the diamond-like carbon film, and depositing the film on a substrate being moved through said plasma region. Also claimed is an apparatus for fabricating a magnetic recording medium by sequentially and continuously forming a magnetic layer and a diamond-like carbon film on a polymer substrate material, which comprises at least a first vacuum vessel for forming the magnetic layer of the magnetic recording medium and a second vacuum vessel for forming the diamond-like carbon film, provided that the pressure difference between the operation pressures for the first vessel and the second vessel is set in the range of from 10^{-2} to 10^{-5} Torr.

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FIG. 1(A)
PRIOR ART

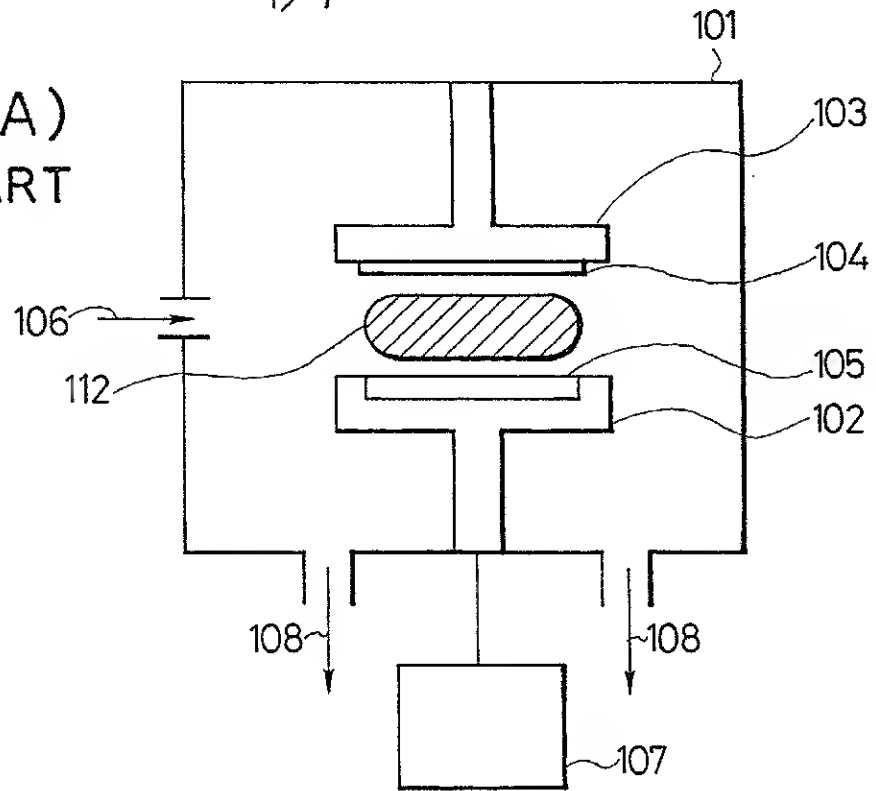


FIG. 1(B)
PRIOR ART

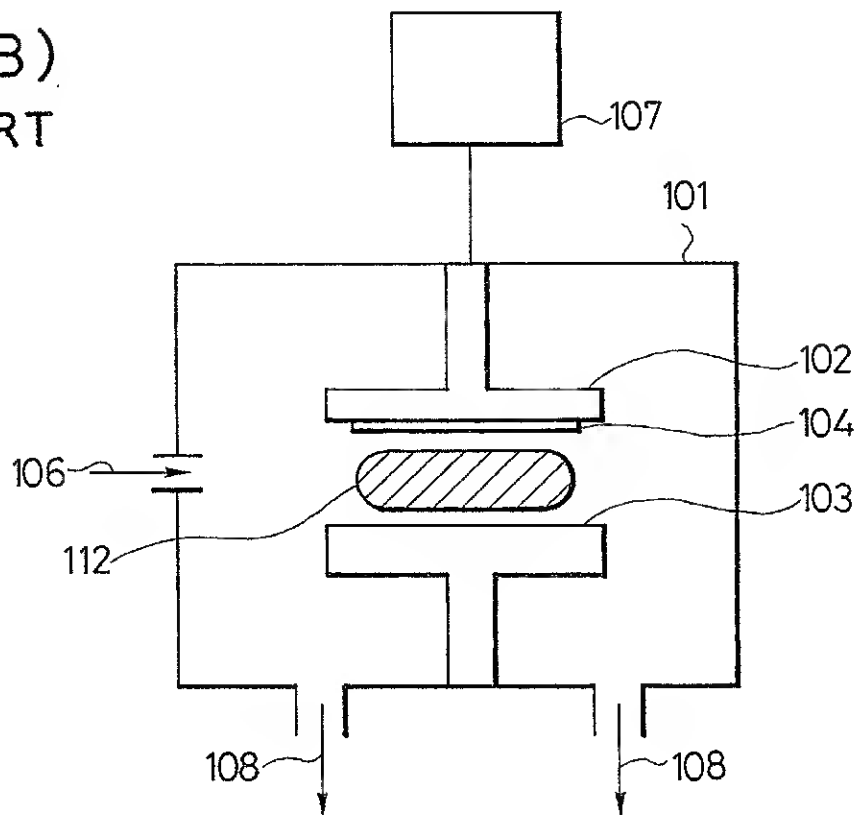


FIG. 2

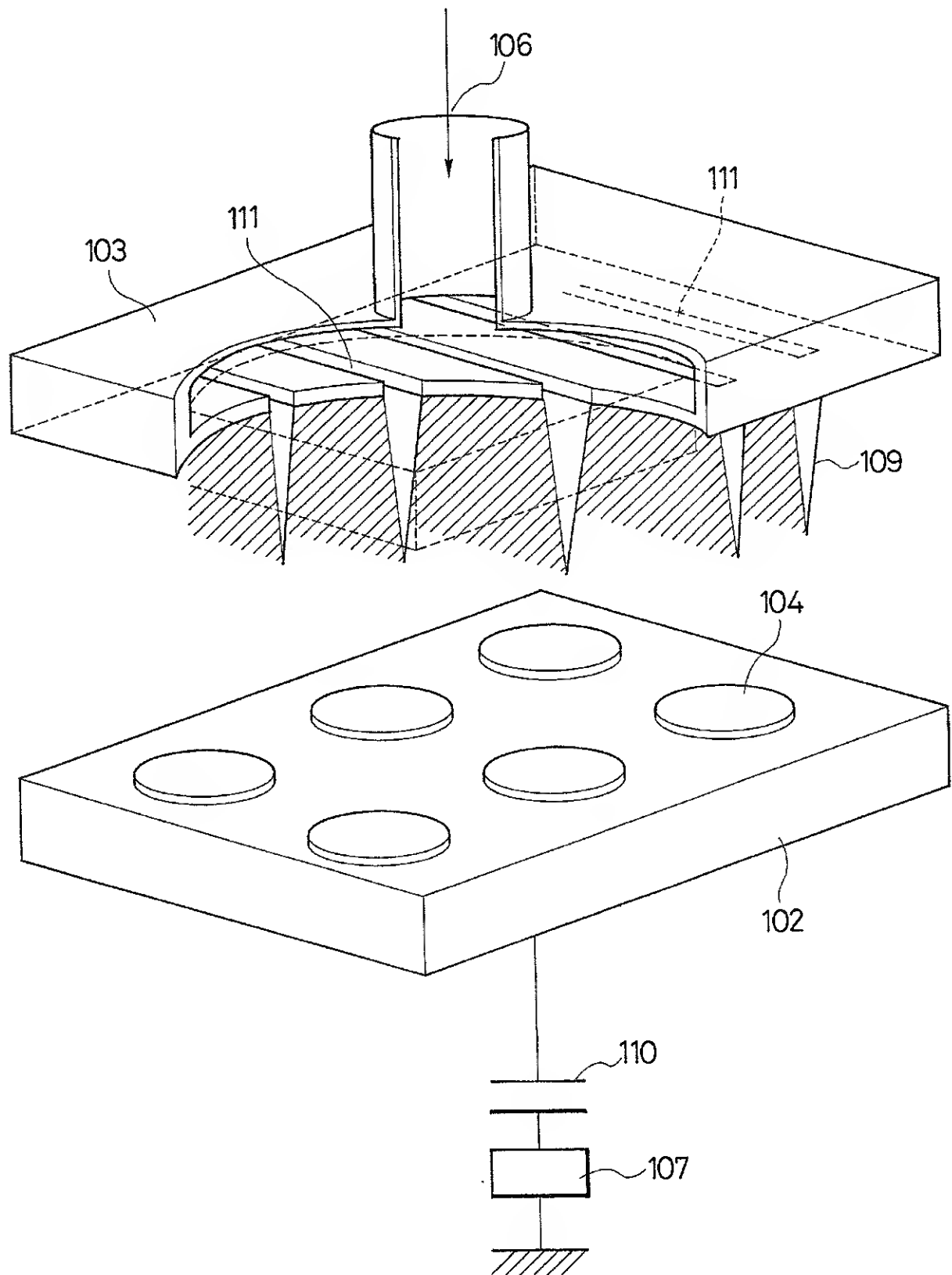


FIG. 3

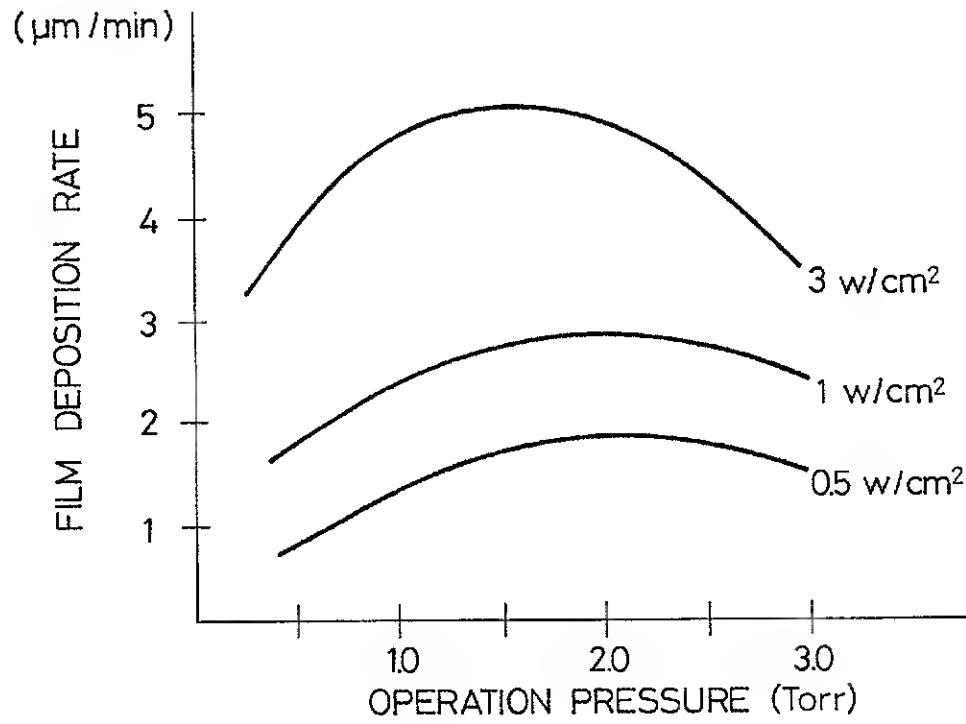


FIG. 4

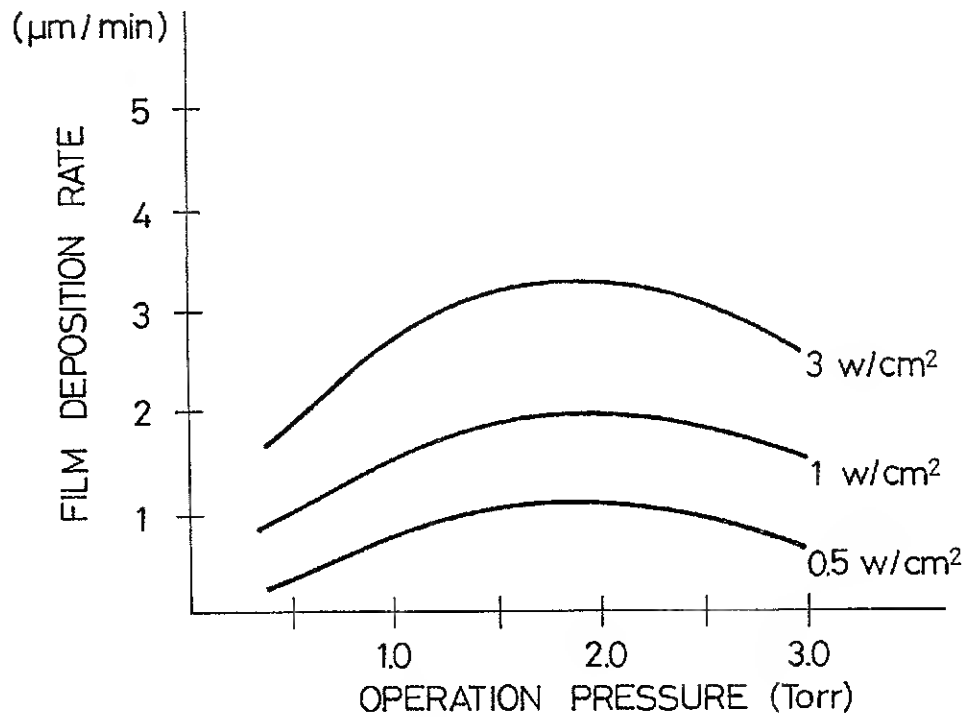


FIG. 5

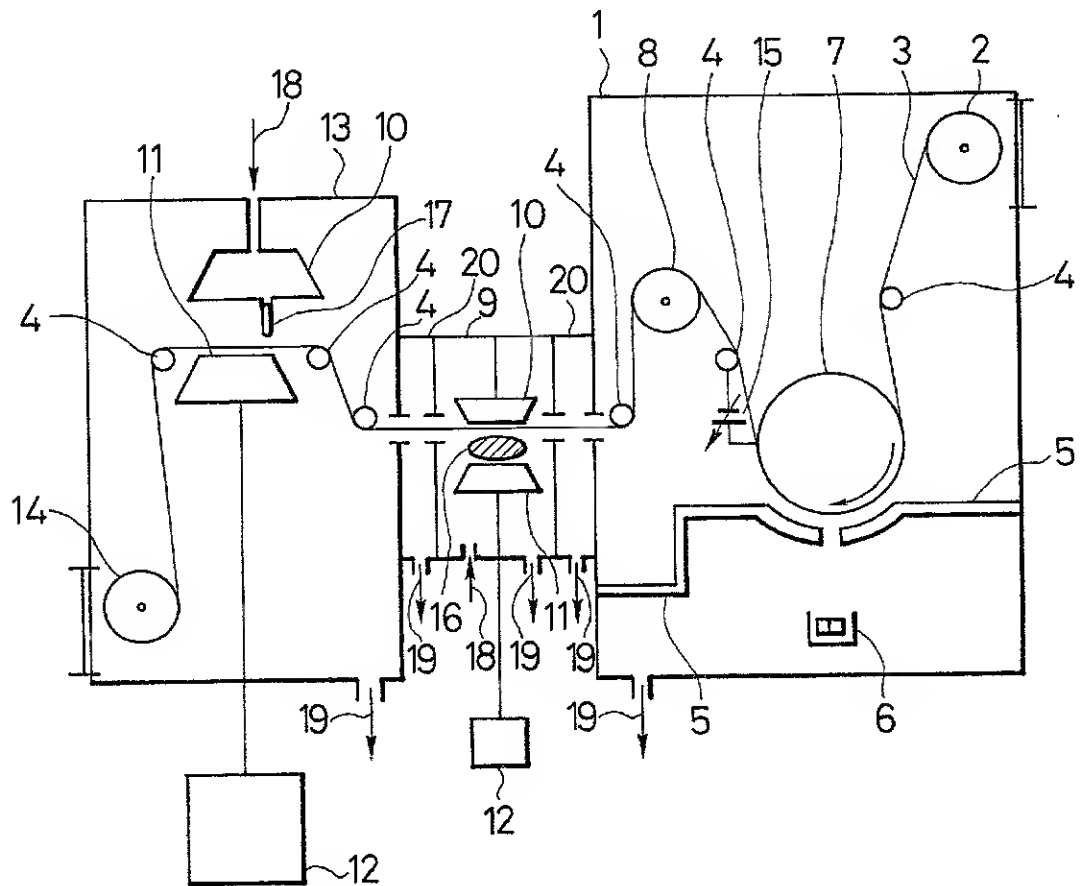


FIG. 6

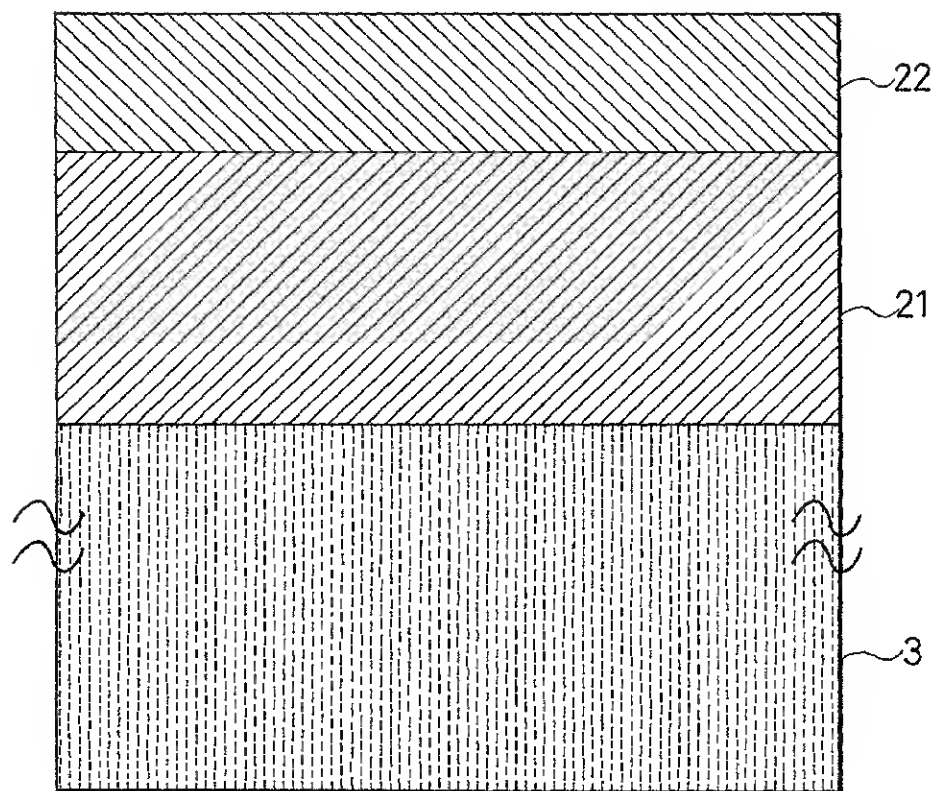


FIG. 7

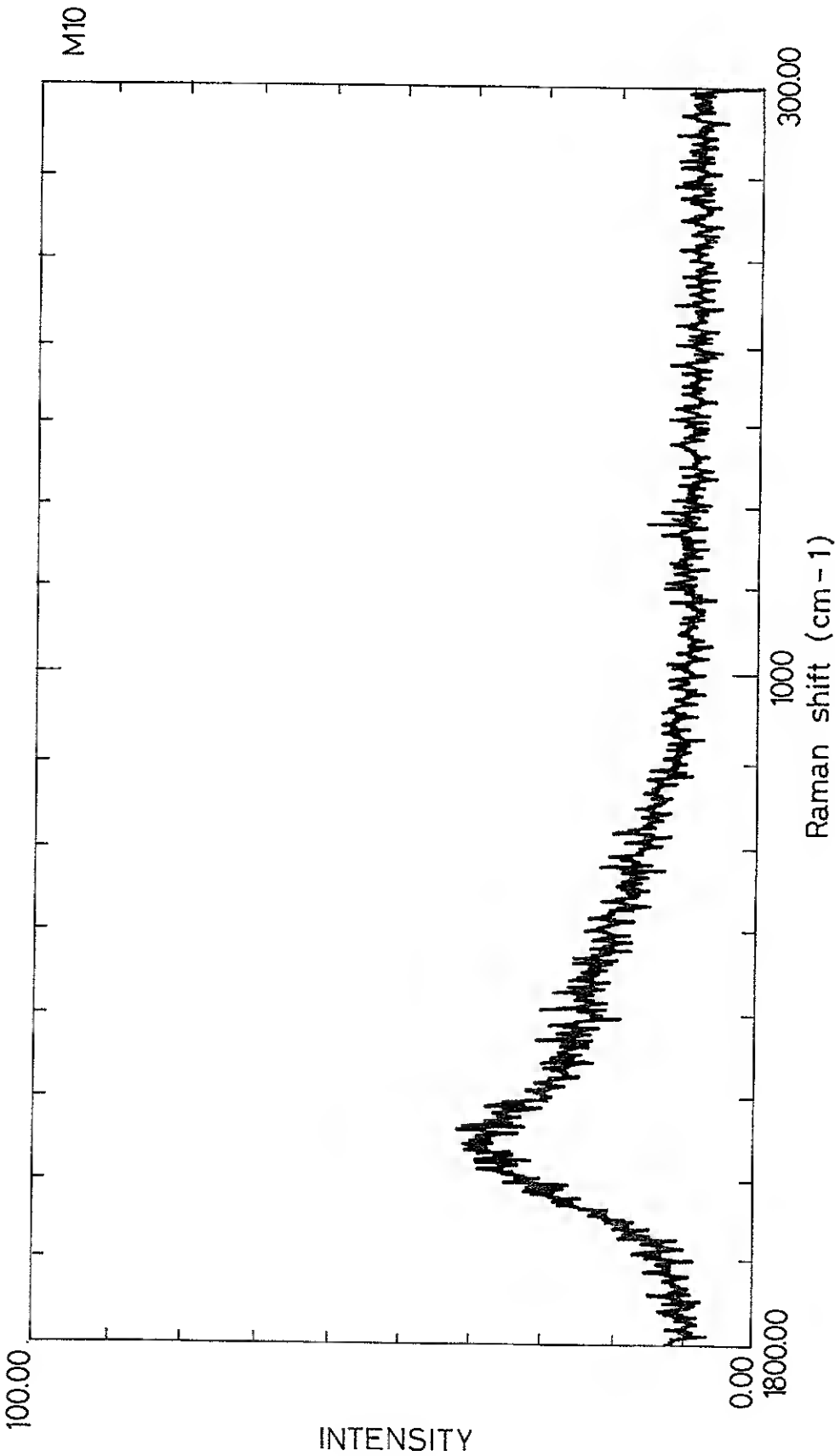
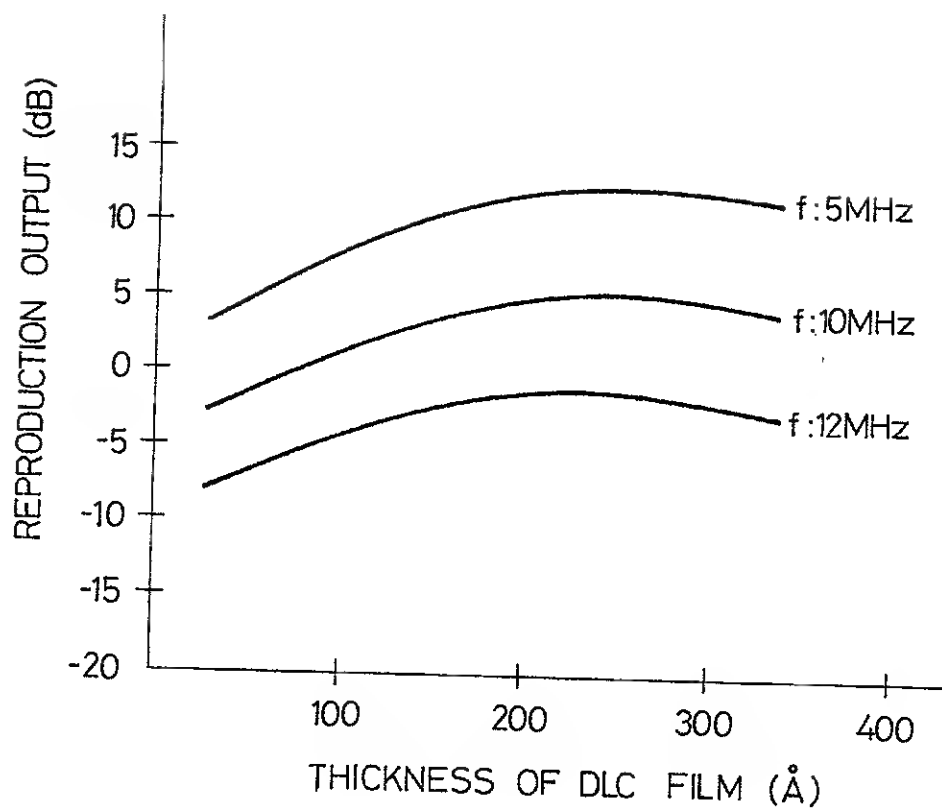


FIG. 8



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As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that: my residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated next to my name; that I verily believe that I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or a joint inventor (if plural inventors are named below) of the invention entitled: * PLASMA PROCESS, PLASMA APPARATUS, PROCESS FOR FABRICATING A MAGNETIC RECORDING MEDIUM, AND APPARATUS FOR FABRICATING THE SAME, the specification of which is attached hereto unless the following box is checked:

☒ The specification was filed on December 28, 1993
and was assigned Serial No. 08/173,961
and was amended on _____
(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).

I do not know and do not believe the same was ever known or used in the United States of America before my or our invention thereof, or patented or described in any printed publication in any country before my or our invention thereof, or more than one year prior to this application, that the same was not in public use or on sale in the United States of America more than one year prior to this application, that the invention has not been patented or made the subject of an inventor's certificate issued before the date of this application in any country foreign to the United States of America on an application filed by me or my legal representatives or assigns more than twelve months prior to this application, and that no application for patent or inventor's certificate on this invention has been filed in any country foreign to the United States of America prior to this application by me or my legal representatives or assigns, except as follows:

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Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority Claimed

Insert Priority
Information
(if appropriate)

<u>4-360193</u> (Number)	<u>JAPAN</u> (Country)	<u>December 28, 1992</u> (Month/Day/Year Filed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<u>4-360194</u> (Number)	<u>JAPAN</u> (Country)	<u>December 28, 1992</u> (Month/Day/Year Filed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<u>Not Assigned yet</u> (Number)	<u>JAPAN</u> (Country)	<u>December 24, 1993</u> (Month/Day/Year Filed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<u>Not Assigned yet</u> (Number)	<u>JAPAN</u> (Country)	<u>December 24, 1993</u> (Month/Day/Year Filed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Month/Day/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

All Foreign Applications, if any, for any Patent or Inventor's Certificate Filed More Than 12 Months Prior To The Filing Date of This Application:

Country	Application No.	Date of Filing (Month/Day/Year)
_____	_____	_____

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status—patented, pending, abandoned)
_____	_____	_____
(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status—patented, pending, abandoned)
_____	_____	_____

*NOTE: Must be completed.

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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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 Insert Citizenship

Insert Post Office Address

Second Inventor:
 see above

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re DIVISIONAL Application of)
In re Divisional Patent Application of)
Kenji ITOH et al.)
Based On Serial No. 08/604,713) Art Unit: 1762
Which Was Filed: February 21, 1996) Examiner: R. King
For: PLASMA PROCESS, PLASMA)
APPARATUS PROCESS FOR)
FABRICATING A MAGNETIC)
RECORDING MEDIUM, AND)
APPARATUS FOR FABRICATING)

NOTICE OF CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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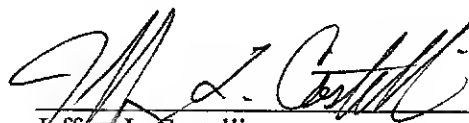
Sir:

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